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Coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report highlights major new developments and milestones in the coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda. It underscores the raising awareness on behalf of the international community of the issues and challenges associated with rapid urbanization, not least the consequences for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. This awareness has led to an increase in the scope and depth of response at the global, regional and country levels.

The report focuses on outcomes and results while providing a succinct analysis of their underlying rationale and processes. These include:

- Decisions of the twenty-first session of Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), including the approval of a sharply focused and results-based medium-term strategic and institutional plan for 2008-2013 and, as part of that plan, the go ahead for UN-Habitat to engage in experimental reimbursable seeding operations for financing pro-poor housing and urban development;
- Responses emerging from the growing realization on behalf of the international community for the need to focus on the social, economic and environmental consequences of rapid urbanization in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals;
- Human settlements and crises;
- The participation and contribution of UN-Habitat to "delivering as one" at the country level;
- Conclusions and recommendations.

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The report concludes that the emerging but very robust response on behalf of all Habitat Agenda partners to the coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda and related Millennium Development Goals is a strong indication of the coming of age of the urban agenda. This realization calls for an equally robust decision by the Economic and Social Council to adopt sustainable urbanization, with a strong focus on urban poverty reduction, as a cross-cutting issue for more effective follow-up action within the existing social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to paragraph (c) of Economic and Social Council decision 2006/247.

II. Decisions of intergovernmental bodies

A. Decisions of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

2. A key decision of the twenty-first session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat was the approval of the medium-term strategic and institutional plan for 2008-2013. This six-year plan is poised to enhance the coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda and other human settlements-related development goals. Conceived as a contribution to United Nations system-wide reform, its key pillars consist of a compelling vision, a set of strategic objectives accompanied by sharply defined focus areas, and a results-based methodological framework.

3. The vision of the plan is to help create by 2013 the necessary conditions for concerted international and national efforts to realize more sustainable urbanization, including efforts to arrest the growth of slums and to set the stage for the subsequent reduction in and reversal of the number of slum-dwellers worldwide.

4. The strategic objectives of the plan are:

(a) To mobilize networks of Habitat Agenda partners to implement a shared vision of sustainable urbanization;

(b) To develop and advocate norms for sustainable and harmonious urban development, housing, upgrading and prevention of slums as a principal means of reducing poverty;

(c) To improve global knowledge and understanding of urban development issues and development strategies and to engage in the monitoring and dissemination of best practices in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the attainment of relevant Millennium Development Goals;

(d) To build capacity of Governments, local authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners through technical cooperation and training;

(e) To apply innovative pro-poor mechanisms for the financing of housing and urban services and infrastructure and promote their scaling-up by working with appropriate development actors and investors.

5. The plan is designed to strengthen response to the expectations of Governments and of the international community by building on UN-Habitat's comparative advantages. These include: (a) a combined normative and operational approach to urbanization; (b) a recognized capacity to bring all spheres of government and civil society together to engage in policy dialogue and participatory planning; (c) a long-standing partnership with local authorities in promoting sustainable urban development; and (d) its technical expertise in such areas as land and property administration; urban environmental management; participatory

planning; bridging relief with sustainable recovery and reconstruction; urban safety and security; and urban governance.

1. Focus areas

6. For the period 2008-2013, UN-Habitat will concentrate on the following six mutually reinforcing focus areas:

(a) Advocacy, monitoring and partnerships;

(b) Participatory urban planning, management and governance;

(c) Pro-poor land and housing;

(d) Environmentally sound and affordable basic infrastructure and services;

(e) Strengthening human settlements finance systems;

(f) Excellence in management.

2. Enhanced normative and operational framework

7. The need for more effective country support was identified as a priority by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and by the United Nations reform process. UN-Habitat will use an enhanced normative and operational framework to package: (a) a robust monitoring, advocacy and communications strategy to raise awareness and political commitment to address the challenges of rapid urbanization, urban poverty and slums; (b) technical advisory and capacity-building support for policy and institutional reform in the key areas of land and housing, infrastructure and basic services, and planning and finance; and (c) pre-investment programming and resource mobilization in collaboration with international and domestic financial institutions and the private sector to bring pilot housing and urban development initiatives to scale.

3. Partnering for going to scale

8. Given the magnitude of the challenge, operationalizing the medium-term strategic and institutional plan requires a more systemic approach to partnerships and networking. Major emphasis will therefore be placed on the catalytic role of UN-Habitat in working with and supporting the efforts of other United Nations bodies, the Habitat Agenda partners, international and domestic financial institutions, urban service providers, and knowledge networks. Additional emphasis will be placed on establishing new partnerships and strengthening existing ones to develop and pioneer innovative financing tools and instruments, including reimbursable seeding operations, to support affordable housing, slum prevention, and the provision of basic urban infrastructure and services.

B. Other decisions of the Governing Council

9. The Governing Council for UN-Habitat adopted a landmark decision on the "Guidelines on decentralization and strengthening of local authorities". That decision, which resulted from a decade of consultations at the global, regional and national levels, provides concrete expression to one of the key provisions of the Habitat Agenda in the strengthening of the role and contribution of local authorities

in its implementation. The decision provides further impetus for UN-Habitat to assume a leadership and catalytic role in assisting interested member States in adapting the guidelines to their specific developmental needs and priorities.

10. The Governing Council for UN-Habitat also endorsed, in its resolution 21/4, the proposal by UN-Habitat to initiate consultations for the formulation and adoption of a similar set of guidelines for "access to basic services". This represents a major step forward in promulgating a rights-based approach in support of the attainment of internationally agreed development goals on health, nutrition, disease prevention and access to water and sanitation. The first draft of the guidelines are currently being prepared in close consultations with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, prior to consultations with member States and other Habitat Agenda partners.

III. Emerging responses to the challenges of rapid urbanization

A. Responses at the global and inter-agency level

11. The systematic collection and analysis of scientific data on urban trends and issues over the past decade, as called for by the Habitat Agenda, have begun to pay off. The results have contributed to a growing recognition and realization of the social, economic and environmental consequences of rapid urbanization. Recent flagship reports published by UN-Habitat in 2006 and 2007 have provided compelling evidence of the inexorable rise in the urbanization of poverty and social exclusion. This evidence has underscored the urgent need to address urban poverty and deprivation in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

12. This evidence has also provided the impetus for an emerging system-wide response in support of the coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda. It has prompted other funds, programmes and agencies to consider the impact of urbanization and urban growth in their respective areas of focus, leading to a substantial increase in joint activities. These activities fall into four main categories, namely: (a) monitoring and advocacy; (b) policy and institutional reform; (c) pre-investment capacity-building; and (d) mobilizing domestic and international development finance. The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of coordinated responses at the inter-agency level.

1. United Nations Fund for Population Activities

13. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) entitled its *State of World Population 2007 report "Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth"*. The report highlighted the socio-demographic challenges of an emerging urban millennium. It underscored the urbanization of poverty and the urgent need for Governments to adopt a rights-based approach to meeting the basic needs of the urban poor and to adopt a longer-term and broader vision of the use of urban space to reduce poverty and promote sustainability. Finally the report looked at the need for policies to address the specific needs of the two extremes of the emerging demographic

make-up of cities, namely, youth, on the one hand, and the ageing population, on the other.

2. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

14. Collaboration intensified with UNESCO on several fronts. On the normative front, both agencies are working closely together to promote the "right to the city". This rights-based approach to urban development complements UN-Habitat's ongoing work on monitoring forced evictions, and developing normative guidelines for access to basic services. It also dovetails with the work of the Global Land Tools Network which provides an array of normative tools and instruments to improve access to land and property rights by the urban poor.

15. UN-Habitat contributes actively to the Inter-agency Committee on the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), led by UNESCO, to ensure the integration of issues pertaining to sustainable urbanization in educational curricula.

16. At the knowledge-management level, both agencies are working together on the urban environment, including three-way collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the biosphere, and bilateral collaboration on the use of solar energy. Similarly, collaboration continues in the documentation and dissemination of lessons learned from best practices in social sustainability in historic towns and districts.

17. At the country level, UNESCO is providing capacity-building assistance for several pilot projects. These include an urban planning project for New Delhi, urban environmental profiling and cultural heritage in Ouarzazate, Morocco, and vocational training related to post-earthquake reconstruction in Pakistan. In Afghanistan, a collaborative partnership with UNESCO has been established to implement the National Literacy Programme in 20 provinces through community development councils which were established by UN-Habitat under the National Solidarity Programme.

3. World Health Organization (WHO): the urban health challenge

18. A key finding of the UN-Habitat report entitled *State of the World's Cities* 2006-2007: the Millennium Development Goals and Urban Sustainability: 30 years of Shaping the Habitat Agenda[1] is that the health of urban dwellers in developing country cities is less determined by income than by physical living conditions. Overcrowding, lack of access to clean water and basic sanitation, and poor safety are some of the key determinants of poor health and affect an estimated 1 billion people currently living in slums. Indeed, slum-dwellers are more likely to die young, to suffer from disease, and to contract HIV/AIDS than any other segment of the population. Collectively, they constitute one of the single largest challenges for attaining the poverty and health-related Millennium Development Goals.

19. These and other findings form the basis of the deepening collaboration between UN-Habitat and WHO at the global and country levels. In terms of global advocacy, the Executive Director of UN-Habitat has been a member of the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health. The Commission report includes

[1] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.06.III.Q.3.

several key recommendations related to health issues in urban settings and to the critical contribution of settlements planning and management in reducing health inequities.

20. At the country level, the two agencies are coordinating efforts in a wide range of areas, including evidence gathering and analysis, city-to-city learning and exchange facilities, urban safety, and urban transport. These efforts will form part of the substantive preparations for a global forum on healthy urbanization to be held in 2010.

4. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

21. In 2007, the Commission on Crime adopted a resolution calling for increased collaboration between UN-Habitat and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to address the rising tide of crime and violence. The findings of the *Global Report on Human Settlements 2007*, entitled "*Enhancing Urban Safety and Security*" show that 60 per cent of all urban residents in developing countries and countries with economies in transition have been victims of crime. The report further indicated that effective and sustainable strategies for combating and preventing crime are based on concerted approaches to urban planning, management and governance; community involvement in policing initiatives; and enhanced social justice.

22. On the advocacy front, both agencies are following a road map leading to the Twelfth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, to be held in 2010; the road map includes several events, among them, the International Youth Crime Prevention and Cities Summit to be held in June 2008 in Durban, South Africa. These events will be used to enhance peer-review concept papers and capacity-building and project formulation tools currently under development. Both agencies are also seeking to promote sports as a tool for crime prevention focusing on Africa, capitalizing on the build-up to the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

23. UN-Habitat and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime have also agreed to jointly pursue pre-investment capacity-building in countries in which both agencies are active. This will involve the design of bankable projects where the application of crime-prevention tools and the preparation of crime prevention strategies will be followed up with investments in infrastructure development for safer urban spaces and streets, and improved policing.

5. Department of Economic and Social Affairs

24. Collaboration intensified between UN-Habitat and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat further to a fruitful joint undertaking initiated in 2006 to identify and promote innovations and best practices in governance and public administration.

25. The collaboration focused on applying UN-Habitat's decade-long experience in documenting and transferring best practices to the Department's efforts to improve service delivery and public administration. An expert group meeting was organized to explore and assess the state of the art in service delivery, public utilities and public administration in the Mediterranean region. A book on innovations in governance and public administration across the Mediterranean region was published to that effect.

26. More recently, UN-Habitat provided substantive inputs to the preparation of a "Guide for the transfer and adaptation of innovations in governance" as a tool to facilitate the transfer of good practices in governance. These guidelines and joint publications represent a milestone in the convergence of two distinct substantive areas, namely, public administration and human settlements, in support of better governance. Finally, in cooperation with the Department, the Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development, and other academic and civil society partners, UN-Habitat co-organized a "Forum on sustainable urbanization in the information age" in New York in April 2008.

6. United Nations Environment Programme

27. Relations between the two global programmes headquartered in Nairobi were further strengthened with the adoption, in 2007, of a Partnership framework, which provides the impetus for a joint workplan focusing on five specific areas, namely: (a) cities and climate change; (b) sustainable urban transport; (c) integrated waste management; (d) urban biodiversity and ecosystems; and (e) joint advocacy and outreach activities.

28. With regard to capacity-building, both agencies are in the process of identifying five African cities interested in developing climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. This activity is being undertaken in collaboration with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives.

29. As founding members of the Global Alliance for EcoMobility, which was launched at the 2007 United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Bali, Indonesia, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN-Habitat are promoting investment in pedestrian walkways and bicycle lanes in developing country cities as part of a global "10 percent campaign". The focus of the initiative is on providing pre-investment technical assistance to such cities for the building of adequate urban infrastructure for sustainable urban transport, including non-motorized transport, road safety and the use of alternative energy.

30. In the areas of outreach and advocacy, both agencies are taking advantage of the existing schedule of international events to "speak with one voice" on issues of climate change, biodiversity, transport and energy, as part of a broader message on sustainable urban development.

7. United Nations Development Fund for Women

31. UN-Habitat's seminal work on victimization surveys and other tools for assessing the gender dimension of crime and violence in urban areas has provided overwhelming evidence of the causal links between the design and management of public spaces and crime and violence. These findings have contributed to a growing awareness of the specific issue of violence committed against women in public spaces, and of how poorly planned and designed public spaces make women and girls particularly vulnerable. They also point to the critical role of local authorities in addressing this scourge through more effective urban planning, management and governance.

32. On the advocacy and capacity-building front, UN-Habitat and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) organized throughout 2007 a series of awards on women-friendly cities in the Latin American and Caribbean

region. This led to an unprecedented collection of case studies on how local authorities and other stakeholders are reducing incidences of crime and violence in general and against women in particular. These findings have compelled UNIFEM to incorporate the issue of women's safety and security in urban public spaces in its work programme in Latin America. They have also contributed towards increased collaboration between women's organizations and local authorities in several countries, leading to a joint international conference on women's safety and security, to be held in Brazil in July 2008. The conference will focus on the normative and operational lessons learned and will be followed by training of trainers on women's safety audits, a tool used to address violence against women in urban public spaces.

33. Although the Beijing Platform for Action did not incorporate the issues of cities and the plight of the urban poor, there is growing recognition of the right of women to security of tenure, land, property and inheritance as a critical element of gender equality and women's empowerment. This has been further emphasized by the Task force on Millennium Development Goal 3, on gender equality and women's empowerment, which has embraced these elements as part of the key indicators and action areas.

8. United Nations Children's Fund

34. Collaboration intensified between UN-Habitat and the Joint Monitoring Group coordinated by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WHO on the harmonization of indicators for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. The Group adopted the UN-Habitat suggestion that the target on improved sanitation be revised. The revision entails the inclusion of pit latrines in urban settings as a 50 per cent improvement in access to sanitation. The adoption of this new definition represents a reduction in the number of slum-dwellers in the world, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, as lack of sanitation is one of the key criteria for defining a slum. More importantly, however, it sends a strong message to Governments that the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in urban areas often requires a revision of norms and standards that are unaffordable for the poor.

9. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

35. Although the majority of indigenous peoples globally still live in rural areas, there has been an accelerated voluntary and involuntary migration to urban areas. Cities can generate and intensify social exclusion of indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups. Indigenous women and youth are usually the worst affected by discrimination in these areas. Many of the indigenous persons living in urban areas are among the most impoverished.

36. From 27 to 29 March 2007, an International Expert Group Meeting on Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration was held in Santiago de Chile, with the objective of better understanding the living conditions and rights of indigenous peoples in urban areas.[2] UN-Habitat co-organized the meeting as part of its work with the

[2] The meeting was initiated by UN-Habitat and co-organized by UN-Habitat, OHCHR, the secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Latin America and the Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE)-ECLAC and the International Organization for Migration. The meeting was supported by the Government of Canada.

UN-Habitat-OHCHR joint programme, to United Nations Housing Rights Programme.

37. One of the outcomes of the meeting was the development of policy guidelines for Governments and local authorities related to the challenges faced by indigenous peoples in cities, agreed to by the sixth session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.[3] Through the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Issues, and with the support of the Government of Canada, UN-Habitat has started developing guidelines for Governments and local authorities on improving the living conditions of urban indigenous peoples. These guidelines will add an urban component to the recently adopted United Nations Development Group Guidelines on Indigenous issues and provide additional support to member States, Habitat Agenda partners and United Nations country teams.

10. International Labour Organization

38. Building on the successful joint capacity-building programme under the title "Decent jobs and basic services," collaboration between ILO and UN-Habitat has expanded and deepened. The two organizations, jointly with UNDP/Public-Private Partnerships for the Urban Environment continue, through inter-agency meetings, to share tools and experiences and seek synergy on pro-poor public and private partnership. A similar effort to enhance synergy on promoting local economic development is under way. A conference organized by ILO is planned for October 2008, at which UN-Habitat and other relevant agencies are expected to share their tools and programmes and explore opportunities for synergy and impact. In response to the growing challenge of urban unemployment, ILO, in collaboration with UN-Habitat and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), has initiated the preparation of a policy advisory note on integrating employment into city development and slum upgrading strategies, including a specific reference to employment creation in urban infrastructure investments. ILO is also involved in the ongoing work of developing normative guidelines for access to basic services.

39. At the operational level, ILO is participating in an inter-agency local economic development initiative for the Lake Victoria region, spearheaded by UN-Habitat. UN-Habitat and ILC are also at the inception stage of a joint project focusing on territorial economic development and job creation in Serbia. In addition, ILO is seeking UN-Habitat's collaboration in its cooperatives support programme for Eastern and Southern Africa, which is expected to be launched soon.

40. As part of the implementation plan for the one stop information centre in Nairobi under the youth empowerment programme, UN-Habitat has supported three organizations involved in promoting youth initiatives in three slum areas, namely, Korogocho, Mathare and Dandora in Nairobi. In the Mathare slum specifically, UN-Habitat has partnered with the Mathare Youth Association and ILO under the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC). The centres provide the youth with space, skills training and capacity-building.

[3] See United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Report on the sixth session (14-25 May 2007), *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Supplement No. 23*, E/2007/43, E/C.19/2007/12, para. 109.

11. Global Land Tool Network: a multi-agency endeavour

41. UN-Habitat is the secretariat for the Global Land Tools Network, which has over 26 partners, including international organizations, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank, international civil society organizations, such as the Huairou Commission, bilateral entities, such as the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, professional associations, such as the International Federation of Surveyors, and international training and research institutions, such as the International Technical Institute for Geo-information and Earth Sciences. The aim of the Network is to develop pro-poor, gendered, land tools at scale, which will make it possible for Member States to deliver security of tenure to the urban and rural poor and to undertake land management for strengthening city management, improving women's property rights and increasing food production.

42. In order to reach these objectives, a range of activities has been undertaken, including the holding of seven workshops and events, such as an expert group meeting with the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs cluster group of humanitarians on the development of post-natural disaster land guidelines for the United Nations system. The documentation and development of new pro-poor land tools is being done in four countries each year, and currently in Botswana, Haiti and Kenya. Targeted research, for instance the development of an evaluation framework for the assessment of the extent of gender responsiveness of large-scale land tools, such as the land records system of a country, is also being undertaken with over 10 outputs alone in 2008. More than nine publications have been produced, including the latest on "Security of tenure for all", which presents the main messages of UN-Habitat and the Network partners with regard to land in both urban and rural areas. Attainment of the objectives of the Network requires close cooperation between partners at the country level, led by Governments, working with civil society and the private sector, as well as with multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank, FAO and UNDP. Modalities for "delivering as one" in the land sector are under development and a mission was undertaken to Madagascar for that purpose.

B. Coordinated responses with regional commissions

43. The Habitat Agenda calls for all Member States and partners to monitor housing and urbanization trends and conditions. As part of its continuing effort to assist countries in developing and strengthening monitoring systems to collect and analyse urban data, UN-Habitat expended its collaboration with the regional economic commissions for Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean in a series of regional training programmes targeting national statistical offices in 80 countries.

44. The use of urban indicators at the sub-city level allowed UN-Habitat to reveal, for the first time in 2006, the true extent of urban poverty and deprivation, heretofore obfuscated by the assumption that people living in proximity to services have access to them. This seminal finding has led UN-Habitat to team up with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in the further development of urban indicators at the sub-city level to better inform policies and

strategies on combating urban poverty and deprivation. These indicators will be integrated into the joint publication of the State of Asian Cities Report and the State of Latin American Cities Report. In a similar vein, UN-Habitat is supporting the efforts of the Economic Commission for Africa to create a regional observatory on women's rights in the region.

45. UN-Habitat continues to work closely with the Economic Commission for Europe in coordinating work on normative guidelines of the Commission's Committee on Human Settlements and in assisting countries with economies in transition to improve their capacities to implement those guidelines. UN-Habitat, in close collaboration with the Department's Office of Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Government of Bahrain, provided substantive support to the 2008 Economic and Social Council regional meeting of the ESCWA region held in Manama in June 2008 on the theme of "Sustainable urbanization".

46. A joint programme between UN-Habitat, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and UNDP is developing gender indicators for the Africa region to monitor gender equality and women's empowerment both in urban and rural areas. This represents a major breakthrough in focusing inter-agency collaboration on the living and working conditions of women in cities and towns.

47. Collaboration continued with ESCAP, ESCWA and ECLAC for the organization of a series of high-level meetings of ministers on housing and urban development for their respective regions. The focus of those meetings continues to be on the attainment of human settlements-related Millennium Development Goals and the Habitat Agenda.

C. Strategic partnerships with international and regional financial institutions

48. One of the cornerstones of UN-Habitat's medium-term strategic and institutional plan is its catalytic role in pre-investment capacity-building to leverage domestic and international finance to bring pilot housing and urban development initiatives to scale. In the reporting period, focus has been placed on strengthening existing partnerships and establishing new strategic alliances in this endeavour.

1. African Development Bank

49. In Africa, the Water for African Cities Programme leveraged US$ 217 million in grants and $362 million in loans from the African Development Bank. These grants and loans are provided as a follow-up to pre-investment capacity-building activities that enhance the sustainability of investments in the fast-track provision of water and sanitation in secondary towns to meet Millennium Development Goal 7, target 10. Preparations for project proposals for improved water and sanitation targeting the urban poor in Ethiopia are also under way with the World Bank, involving an initial investment of about $60 million.

2. East African Community

50. A recent partnership with the East African Community has led to the expansion of the Lake Victoria Region Water and Sanitation Initiative to cover an additional

15 towns. Originally involving Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, the Initiative will now also benefit towns in Burundi and Rwanda, following the admission of the two countries as members of the East African Community. As in the Water for African Cities Programme, the African Development Bank is providing an initial grant facility for project formulation.

3. Asian Development Bank

51. Similar agreements have been entered into with the Asian Development Bank for up to $1 billion in follow-up investment finance for improved water and sanitation in five countries. These investments have thus far benefited some 440,000 people, mostly living in low-income communities. In the case of the Mekong River Basin, these investments are also designed to reduce fresh water pollution.

4. Inter-American Development Bank

52. Similar arrangements have been put into place with the Inter-American Development Bank for the Latin American and the Caribbean region. Priorities will include waste-water treatment.

5. Council of Europe Development Bank

53. In the course of 2007, UN-Habitat started to assist countries in South-eastern Europe to improve their policies and institutional frameworks in the area of social housing in order to qualify for soft loans from the Council of Europe Development Bank. In addition, technical assistance has been initiated with nine Albanian municipalities and the Government of Albania for the implementation of a loan from the Council of Europe Development Bank for social housing.

6. World Bank: Cities Alliance

54. The medium-term strategy of the Cities Alliance, and UN-Habitat's medium-term strategic and institutional plan complement each other in significant ways. Indeed, an excellent platform has now been laid for vastly improved collaboration between UN-Habitat and the Cities Alliance, particularly for raising awareness on urban challenges and on advocacy and policy issues.

55. To this end, UN-Habitat and the Cities Alliance secretariat have agreed to develop a three-year work programme, which will be subject to an annual bilateral review meeting between the Cities Alliance secretariat and its UN-Habitat counterparts.

56. At the country level, UN-Habitat is implementing the National Solidarity Programme of Afghanistan with funding provided by a Trust Fund established by the World Bank. In other countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, UN-Habitat continues to expand its work with the World Bank in the delivery of basic services and infrastructure.

D. Initiatives taken with other intergovernmental organizations

1. European Union entities and bodies

57. On the normative front, UN-Habitat continued to engage the European Union and the European Parliament in a series of policy meetings and dialogues on the issues of sustainable urban development in general, and on the issues of urban poverty in developing countries and in the countries belonging to the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) in particular. This resulted in a joint programme on slum upgrading for ACP countries in support of the attainment of Millennium Development Goal 7, target 11. This slum upgrading programme is supported by the Secretary-General of ACP and the Council of Ministers, as well as by the ACP Parliament. The ACP Group recently approved a €4 million contribution to fund this initiative for urban management and planning covering 90 cities in 30 ACP countries.

2. African Union

58. UN-Habitat continued to support the efforts of the African Union through the NEPAD Cities Initiative, the focus of which is to promote policy dialogue between local and central spheres of government on decentralization, and the exchange of experience and lessons learned from best practices in attaining the Millennium Development Goals at the local level.

3. Regional ministerial meetings on housing and urban development

59. The standing conferences of Ministers of Housing and Urban Development have continued to serve as an effective means of policy dialogue, exchange of experience and promoting joint action. Inspired by the experience of Latin America, where Ministers responsible for human settlements issues had created the standing body of Assembly of Ministers of Housing and Urban Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI), an African and Asian equivalent have been established in support of forging common regional positions and action plans on issues and recommendations relating to human settlements in global forums. These conferences have contributed significantly to strategic coordination among African and Asian member States on the urban agenda. In 2007, MINURVI adopted a common position of the "right to the city", which has led UN-Habitat and UNESCO to ensure follow-up at the regional and global levels.

60. The framework adopted at a special conference of the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, held in April 2006, contributed to a more systemic approach to confronting the slum challenge in Africa. African Ministers were thus able to submit a resolution at the twenty-first session of the UN-Habitat Governing Council in May 2007 proposing the establishment of a fund for slum eradication. While the resolution was adopted in principle, the operational refinement is now a subject for consideration at a third conference to be convened in Abuja, Nigeria in July 2008.

61. Following the inaugural meeting in New Delhi, Ministers of Housing and Urban Development of the Asia-Pacific region consolidated their standing body — the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development — through the active engagement of its Bureau, led by the Minister of Housing and Poverty Alleviation of the Government of India. A second meeting was held in

Tehran in May 2008, where an Action Plan for enhancing sustainable urban development through fostering growth and equity was launched.

4. Partnership with other regional ministerial processes

62. In Africa, UN-Habitat engaged with the ministers responsible for water within the framework of the African Ministerial Council on Water. The UN-Habitat programme on Water for African Cities and the Lake Victoria Region Initiative are among the partner initiatives endorsed by the African Ministerial Council on Water and regular briefings are provided to its Technical Committee and Executive Committee meetings.

63. In Asia, as a follow-up to the first Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development held in New Delhi in 2006, the programme supported the establishment of a mechanism for regional exchange including the establishment of a Ministerial Forum for Water and Sanitation in reporting year. Implementation of various recommendations of the Conference on the delivery of Millennium Development Goals targets for water and sanitation in the region was initiated. The programme was also actively engaged in the second Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, held in Tehran in May 2008.

E. Harnessing the potential of the private sector

1. Strengthening water operators partnerships

64. Following the launch of the "Hashimoto Action Plan" in Mexico in 2006, UN-Habitat was requested by the Secretary-General to take a lead in the Water Operators Partnerships initiative. The Water Operators Partnerships mechanism seeks to establish partnerships and networking between operators at the global, regional and national levels to facilitate a process of "learning-by-doing". The system is designed to greatly accelerate the transfer of knowledge, expertise and experience in support of attaining the internationally agreed development goals for water and sanitation. The Global Water Operators Partnerships Alliance was launched at the World Water Week in Stockholm in 2007.

2. Partnership with Google.org

65. Current methodologies for monitoring water and sanitation service coverage in rapidly growing cities and towns in developing countries are woefully inadequate, both for assessing service coverage and for providing baseline data for design purposes. The main problems are that the existing data is not disaggregated by gender, income levels or type of usage. Furthermore, data is rarely available in geo-referenced form to be able to distinguish between areas which are predominantly unserved or underserved.

66. Google.org supports the implementation of participatory monitoring systems for water and sanitation service delivery in the Lake Victoria Water and Sanitation Initiative. The availability of low-cost, timely and spatially referenced data is a major contribution to more effective decision-making in the provision of basic services. It enables local authorities, service providers and stakeholders to clearly

identify and map out the existing coverage and to evaluate the costs and impact of new or upgraded service schemes for both service providers and consumers.

3. Working with BASF

67. In response to the United Nations Convention on Persons with Disabilities, UN-Habitat expanded its work in slums in Nairobi in October 2007 with a new project entitled "Promoting the rights for health and education for children with disabilities in the Kibera-Soweto Slum". The project is being developed and implemented in partnership with BASF, Germany, a company which has already provided start-up funding for other projects, including the rebuilding of a fish market in post-tsunami Sri Lanka and a cyclone shelter and school reconstruction programme in Bangladesh. The project entails the construction of a resource centre which combines a dispensary for mothers with small children, a physiotherapy facility for disabled children, occupational therapy for disabled children and a one-stop youth centre.

4. Merrill Lynch and the Global Housing Foundation

68. A three-way agreement between UN-Habitat, Merrill Lynch and the Global Housing Foundation is designed to enhance the provision of affordable housing in the Latin American region and beyond. The partnership involves a special purpose credit enhancement vehicle, in the form of guarantees, to encourage the mobilization of resources for financing low-income housing by domestic banks and financial institutions. The implementation process has already started in Nicaragua and Panama, and will expand to Costa Rica, El Salvador and Peru.

F. Civil society and non-governmental organizations

69. UN-Habitat has intensified its partnership with Non-Governmental Organizations Liaison Service in order to capitalize on the unprecedented gathering of Governments, local authorities and civil society partners at the third session of the World Urban Forum held in Vancouver, Canada, in 2006. The collaboration aims to bring the wealth of debate and exchange of experience to civil society partners that may not have the opportunity of participating directly in the fourth session of the Forum to be held in the City of Nanjing, China through, inter alia, a joint newsletter. The newsletter will also be an important means of consulting civil society partners in preparing the new UN-Habitat partnership strategy as part of the medium-term strategic and institutional plan.

70. More than 70 civil society organizations gathered for the African Summit of Civil Society Organizations at UN-Habitat headquarters in Nairobi in January 2007. The summit brought together 95 participants from 19 countries to discuss how best to strengthen the African civil society infrastructure in support of attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

71. At the country level, UN-Habitat is in the process of documenting its experience in working with civil society organizations in several post-disaster reconstruction initiatives in, inter alia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Sudan and Somalia. These experiences show how civil society organizations can play a critical role in mobilizing and restoring communities and livelihoods.

G. Local authorities

72. The important role of local authorities and sub-national spheres of government in contributing to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, has been underlined in paragraph 173 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome.[4] This role was first clearly highlighted in paragraph 12 of the Istanbul Declaration,[5] adopted in 1996, which recognizes "local authorities as our closest partners" of Government in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

73. Against this background, UN-Habitat has intensified efforts over the past years, since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, in 2000, to strengthen this crucial partnership for a timely delivery on its mandate and an effective attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in urban centres and sub-urban areas. A major pillar of the agency's strategy to achieving this goal has been the promotion of decentralization, as a means to strengthen sub-national spheres of government and to promote good governance.

74. The approval of the guidelines on decentralization by the Governing Council in April 2007 clearly positions UN-Habitat as the lead agency for strengthening the role of local authorities for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and related Millennium Development Goals. A priority in the agency's normative and operational work for the period 2008-2013 will thus remain the application of the guidelines at country and city levels, as well as the development of tools and indicators to facilitate their adaptation by interested member States. Key partners in this endeavour will include Ministries responsible for local government, parliamentarians and associations of local authorities at the national, regional and international levels.

75. To this end, UN-Habitat has convened one global and two regional high-level meetings to take stock of ongoing decentralization reform processes. A global consultation has been planned for 2008 in Oslo, in collaboration with the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government. A regional African Ministers of Local Government and Regional Administration has been scheduled for the second quarter 2008 in Yaoundé, while a Latin American and Caribbean meeting of high-level officials has been scheduled for the third quarter 2008 in collaboration with the Government of Spain.

IV. Human settlements and crises

76. UN-Habitat support to projects in Kosovo, the Sudan, southern Sudan and Darfur, Uganda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, South-eastern Europe and Peru have shown how a human settlements planning perspective can facilitate stronger links and a smoother transition between relief and development. As a member of the United Nations Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs, UN-Habitat continues to advocate for more sustainable response policies and strategies in collaboration with major humanitarian agencies.

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[4] See General Assembly resolution 60/1.

[5] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements* (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3-14 June 1996 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IV.6), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

77. Urban insecurity, violence and crime are also key impediments to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Although not identified specifically as part of the Goals, urban crime and violence prevention activities carried out by UN-Habitat and its partners in approximately 165 cities across the world have contributed to establishing conditions that are critical to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, both in terms of protecting people, property and investments, and in terms of risk reduction. Recently, UN-Habitat joined forces with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and other partners in launching the Global Forum for Urban Risk Reduction to promote the integration of risk factors in urban development and settlements planning.

78. A similar agreement was entered into with UNOSAT with a view to strengthen the capacity of local authorities in the use of satellite-based applications for improved territorial planning and management, including adaptation to climate change and to risk assessment.

79. UN-Habitat's approach to human settlements and crisis was endorsed in December 2007 by the subsidiary body of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The policy paper on human settlements and crisis builds on lessons learned from over a decade of involvement in post-disaster and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction where UN-Habitat has demonstrated its value added by integrating principles of human settlements planning in the earliest stages of emergency response and relief.

80. Within the framework of humanitarian reform, UN-Habitat collaborates increasingly with the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNDP, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross on improving the quality and longer-term sustainability of such reform. This includes integrating a human settlements perspective into the earliest stages of emergency relief to ensure that key decisions regarding location, land use, water and energy are taken, so as to facilitate the subsequent transition to early recovery and reconstruction.

81. As the Inter-Agency Standing Committee focal point for housing, land and property, UN-Habitat has, since 2007, led a group of 10 agencies to strengthen the housing, land and property response in emergencies. In addition, UN-Habitat is currently leading efforts in preparing rights-based housing, land and property tools and instruments for property restitution and land tenure rights for both customary and statutory systems.

82. The post-earthquake response in Pakistan and the post-Tsunami interventions in Indonesia marked a milestone in post-disaster recovery and reconstruction. In both cases, UN-Habitat was able to demonstrate the value-added of community-based and people-centred approaches to integrating emergency shelter with longer-term housing reconstruction and the restoration of livelihoods. Lessons learned from both experiences, together with the successful handover of the Housing and Property Directorate in Kosovo, have enabled UN-Habitat to contribute significantly, in a joint effort with UNDP, ILO, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other partners, to the work of the International Recovery Platform.

83. These and other lessons have enabled UN-Habitat to engage UNDP, FAO, UNICEF and UNHCR in joint programming in Somalia supported by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security. They have also led to collaborative arrangements with UNHCR and the IFRC in the Emergency shelter cluster, and with UNDP, FAO and ILO in the Early recovery cluster, to coordinate a range of shelter and housing, land and property assessment tools, methodologies, guidelines and training materials in support of more effective response to settlements in crisis in post-conflict and post-natural disaster situations.

V. Initial results of "delivering as one"

84. "Delivering as one" is viewed by UN-Habitat as a unique opportunity for forging a more effective and coordinated response to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda at the country level. In the course of 2007, UN-Habitat engaged United Nations country teams in all eight pilot programmes to mainstream the Habitat Agenda in country programming and priority-setting. A brief overview of results achieved to date include: in Rwanda, the management structure of the One Programme resulted in improved matching of supply with demand for value-added services in five priority areas: (a) governance; (b) health, HIV, nutrition and population; (c) education; (d) environment; and (e) sustainable growth and social protection. The Habitat Agenda and urban issues are addressed under the three areas of governance, environment and sustainable growth, and social protection.

85. In Viet Nam, activities and expected outputs related to the Habitat Agenda have been articulated into the five outcomes that make up the One Plan for 2006-2010. Delivering as one United Nations has provided UN-Habitat an opportunity to ensure that support to effective urban strategies and the capacity for their implementation are embedded in the country planning framework and across all five priority areas including population, environmental health, sustainable development, public administration reform, and disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness.

86. A major priority for Mozambique, being a country subject to recurrent natural disasters, is risk reduction and sustainable recovery and reconstruction. UN-Habitat has assumed a leadership role within the Shelter and settlement cluster, supporting humanitarian and post-disaster recovery efforts, and ensuring more socially inclusive and participatory approaches to early recovery and reconstruction.

87. The One UN Programme in the United Republic of Tanzania is based on the second United Nations Development Assistance Framework II and country strategic priorities as articulated in poverty reduction strategy papers. The United Nations country team is composed of 18 United Nations agencies. UN-Habitat plays a lead role in the sector working group on lands and human settlements development and also works actively with sector working groups on natural resources, environment, water, employment, HIV/AIDS and gender.

88. The One United Nations programme in Pakistan has five strategic themes: (a) agriculture, rural development and poverty reduction, (b) health and population, (c) disaster risk management, (d) environment; and, (e) education. In addition, four cross-cutting issues were selected: gender, human rights, refugees and civil society participation, to be mainstreamed in to all joint programmes. Based on its recent experience in facilitating and coordinating a wide range of stakeholders in the

in the creation of two of the joint programmes: environment and disaster risk management. In addition, UN-Habitat actively participated in identifying priorities and activities contributing to addressing the cross-cutting issues, including gender, human rights, refugees and civil society participation.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

89. **The very robust response on behalf of all United Nations agencies, other intergovernmental organizations, and of the Habitat Agenda partners to the coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda and related Millennium Development Goals is a strong indication of the coming of age of the urban agenda. The increase in direct collaboration, enhanced coordination, partnerships, and networking is unprecedented. They cover all aspects of the Habitat Agenda at all levels, including advocacy and knowledge generation through more consistent and coordinated evidence gathering, capacity-building through the development tools and methods, and resource mobilization, especially at the country level, to scale-up pilot initiatives and prepare the ground for follow-up investment.**

90. **While the realization that the world in 2007 had become a predominantly urban planet contributed significantly to growing awareness and recognition, the key contributing factors are rooted in the realization that the urbanization of poverty and social exclusion is becoming a major challenge to the attainment of internationally agreed development goals and to sustainable development itself.**

91. **Major global challenges, such as the current food crisis, underscore the importance of addressing the social, economic and environmental consequences of urbanization on an urgent basis. Urbanization brings about irreversible changes in production and consumption patterns, including the way we use land, water and other natural resources that affect food production. These changes also include increases in energy use and consumption, with approximately half of the increased demand associated with urbanization being used for urban transport. Existing trends in rapid urbanization will place further pressures on the demand for energy, including biofuels, thus affecting the pricing of both energy and food.**

92. **These and other challenges require a concerted and integrated approach to the social, economic and environmental challenges of rapid urbanization. For such an approach to become truly effective and commensurate to the challenge, it is proposed that the Economic and Social Council include sustainable urbanization, with a major focus on urban poverty, as a cross-cutting issue to complement and reinforce follow-up within the existing social, economic and environmental pillars for sustainable development. This would ensure that follow-up measures to support the coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the outcomes of all major summits and conferences include the critical urban and spatial dimension of human activity, and that collective efforts are concentrated rather than dispersed, and focused on where every other woman, man and child now live.**

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Item 7 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Coordination, programme and other questions

International cooperation in the field of informatics**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/14, in which the President of the Council was requested to convene the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics for one more year to enable it to continue its efforts to act as a bridge, with regard to information technology, between the evolving needs of Member States and the actions of the Secretariat.

The report highlights the continuing cooperation of the Working Group and the Secretariat, which has resulted in practical enhancements in the area of technology that facilitate the work of Member States and Observers of the United Nations, as well as of non-governmental organizations accredited to the United Nations.

* E/2008/100.

** The submission of the present document was delayed in order that the relevant information could be compiled.

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I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 2007/14, the Economic and Social Council requested the President of the Council to convene the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics for one more year to enable it to carry out, from within existing resources, the provisions of its resolutions on international cooperation in the field of informatics and to facilitate the successful implementation of the initiatives of the Secretary-General with regard to the use of information technology.

2. The Council requested the Working Group to continue its efforts to act as a bridge between the evolving needs of Member States and the actions of the Secretariat. The Working Group has continued to collaborate closely with the Secretariat to direct its existing resources in practical ways that best meet the needs of Member States with regard to the everyday use of information technology in accomplishing the work of the diplomatic community associated with the United Nations.

3. The General Assembly, in its resolution 60/283, recognizing the strategic importance of information and communications technology as a critical reform instrument, established the post of Chief Information Technology Officer, who, in consultation with stakeholders, produced a comprehensive information and communications technology strategy for the Secretariat (A/62/793 and Corr.1). The strategy provides a knowledge management component that will contribute to providing a framework for enhancing international cooperation in the field of informatics by the Secretariat.

II. Cooperation between the Working Group and the Secretariat

4. The Working Group and the Secretariat have maintained effective cooperation. During 2007, the focus of cooperation continued to be informal meetings specifically related to cooperative efforts between the Working Group and the Secretariat.

5. The Secretariat and the Working Group continue to expand their efforts with regard to website tools and to maintain shared responsibility for the creation and maintenance of web pages and for document updates.

6. With the guidance of the Working Group, the Secretariat continues to expand its efforts to more fully utilize CandiWeb, a website built in support of the elections process. Working within existing resources, the Secretariat continues to engage volunteers, Secretariat staff and the staff of permanent missions to create, maintain and support the site.

7. Building on its successful efforts with CandiWeb, the Working Group decided to broaden the reach of web-based tools and expand this mode of working-level coordination to similar information repositories of interest to permanent missions. In that regard, the Secretariat has developed websites for all the Main Committees of the General Assembly.

III. Connectivity and access

8. The Secretariat maintains wi-fi connectivity and dedicated Internet access points for delegates throughout public areas and conference rooms of the New York campus. Plans to adjust wi-fi coverage will be made throughout the duration of the capital master plan in order to maintain continuity of connectivity during meetings, conferences and events, as well as to maintain access to such resources and tools as CandiWeb.

9. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management continues to support and improve the online process for requesting bilateral meetings. Member States directly submit requests electronically for bilateral meetings using the e-Meets system. The Department is also developing an information technology solution for the Protocol and Liaison Service to facilitate the process of accreditation of delegates of the permanent missions.

IV. Information technology services

10. As mentioned above, the Secretariat and the Working Group have cooperated to create a prototype website on United Nations elections and candidatures. CandiWeb makes use of existing Secretariat facilities, and maintenance of the site is shared by the diplomatic community and the Secretariat and is coordinated by the Working Group. The Secretariat and the Working Group will continue to improve the site and its operation in the coming year while maintaining the ease of use that has made it a very useful tool for the diplomatic community.

11. Expanding on the successful implementation of CandiWeb, the Secretariat and the Working Group plan to address more comprehensively the particular information needs of delegations by implementing a Member State portal to replace the current top-level website for the permanent missions (http://www.un.int). The portal will provide improved and consolidated access to both information and services for the diplomatic community.

12. The Secretariat provides website services for many permanent missions and is currently involved in moving a number of websites over to a standard web content management system. The system will streamline permanent mission websites and provide an easy-to-use interface for missions to use in updating and maintaining their content while providing enhanced information security.

13. The Secretariat continues to provide e-mail services to the permanent missions. In 2007, with the cooperation of the Working Group, the Secretariat successfully migrated e-mail services from a non-standard platform to the standard platform used within the Secretariat. This has improved the reliability and maintainability of e-mail services and has significantly reduced duplication of effort.

V. Training, support and awareness

14. The Working Group continues its focus on awareness and is gradually moving the results of its efforts online. The guide to Internet services for delegations will be updated and incorporated into the permanent mission portal described above.

15. The Working Group and the Secretariat continue to explore the idea of establishing a forum in which the diplomatic community and the Secretariat can exchange information and views concerning information and communications technology in the Secretariat, including strategies and initiatives, as an extension of the Working Group's focus on awareness and to serve as an additional bridge between Member States and the Secretariat in the area of informatics.

16. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library continues to enhance its programmes for training in the management and use of United Nations documentation, as well as in the use of internal and external online databases and resources. Delegations have taken advantage of personalized coaching sessions and customized group programmes within the scope of the Personal Knowledge Management initiative, which provides assistance on the use of information-handling tools and resources. In 2007 more than 270 mission staff participated in the Library's training or coaching programmes.

17. In order to improve communication with delegations, a key component of knowledge-sharing, the Department of Public Information and the Department of Management have been working jointly to identify cost-neutral measures to enable relevant information posted on iSeek to be made available to Member States; iSeek content will be included on the Member State portal accessible only to the permanent missions.

18. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) is also active in providing training for mission staff, especially those new to New York. Its information and communications technology policy seminar series was developed to stimulate critical thinking and to provide a forum for discussion and learning related to the potential policy implications of information and communications technologies. UNITAR also offers courses to some 50,000 beneficiaries who participate in its e-learning courses on debt and financial management, peacekeeping, multilateral diplomacy and environmental law. The Institute is enhancing its efforts to broaden the use of instructional technology to cover new demand for training related to social and economic development, aiming to reach an additional 40,000 beneficiaries from Member States annually.

19. The Department of Management provides technical support, typically through the Information Technology Services Division help desk, whenever there are problems with services or infrastructure. In 2007, more than 1,727 calls from permanent missions were handled by the help desk.

20. The Secretariat continues to refurbish older personal computers that are no longer needed and to furnish them to missions, under the overall guidance of the Working Group. Statistics on computing equipment donated to permanent missions in 2007 are contained in the annex.

Annex

Personal computers given to permanent missions

Equipment type	*Number*
Central processing units	1 082
Monitors	1 035
Printers	315
Other devices	3
Total	**2 435**